162 We have been able to define the characteristics of this demographic crisis, of which the Fang as a whole are aware. These are a drop in the population, which is more or less checked according to the region and circumstances; a lack of balance between the number of men and of women — the sex ratio rising rapidly at the level of the oldest age groups — and a more marked aging of the feminine population; an insufficient demographic basis and at the same time a high infant mortality. And it is
168 578 the lack of children and the sudden importance acquired by women (conditioned by their number as well as by the general movement of social evolution) of which the villagers complain, far more than they criticize the inadequacy of sanitary equipment. In a society where the number [that is, the size of the groups] differentiates the groupings in a hierarchical system, and permits personal preeminence, the acute phases of this demographic crisis arouse great anxiety; the decline of fecundity in the women is one of the reasons, the most important one perhaps, for the hostility of the men toward the women.

168 The grounds given for such a situation [100] have a double aspect, modernist and traditionalist. The grounds of the former were displayed at the time of the Pahouin Congress of 1947 and also by certain groupings at the time of the movement for regrouping clans. They are expressed by definite claims, such as demanding a health program and education in hygiene, a desire to control and then limit prostitution, to consolidate the "family" by limiting divorce and curbing adultery, a need for rich crops "that can be sold in order to support the family," (1) etc. The grounds of the
163 186

1. Statement by a Dignitary of the Yémôdâg Tribe, Mitzic, 1949.

traditionalists without doubt compel recognition and represent the opinion of the greatest number. They reveal a strong reaction to the present state of Fang society and a desire to return to a past when everything was better, when there were "a great many men and a great many children"; they express a tendency toward "counter-acculturation." The upheavals that have occurred in

168 186 the social and cultural organizations are directly blamed: the breaking up and dispersal of the groupings resulting in the rupture of fundamental interdictions (especially that of exogamy: with the [835] present confusion each man risks marrying his "sister" and being condemned to a sterile union); the abandonment of traditional religious observances, especially the Biéri worship rendered to [169 842] ancestors — so that the Biéri "revenges" itself, "according to certain informants, by making the women sterile. Borrowing from European civilization and from their neighbors has altered "Fang manners" and resulted in behavior that is not valid for the Fang and puts their social existence in danger. These are the principal reasons brought forth. We have already in this chapter paid particular attention to these facts, because they show the subjective aspect of the demographic crisis and how much the search for fertility and for power, both linked together, still plays a part in the present reactions of this people, how it takes effect in an ambiguous manner by having recourse at the same time to modern foreign methods and to traditional Fang methods. For the Fang villagers the crisis is the most serious consequence of a situation created by colonization — by "civilization," as some of them curiously say. This is sufficient indication that these facts must be integrated in the whole we have undertaken to analyze.

[101] III. The Type of Social Structure (1)

1. A study carried out with the help of documents collected especially among the Fang of the Woleu-N'Tem, and principally in Oyem region where Fang vitality is the most authentic.

Tribes, Clans, and Lineages

596 The recent clan renewal to which we have often referred has shown the still fundamental importance of the groupings established as a function of "kinship." This was immediately grasped by the first observers and administrators of the Fang country, who insisted on the "family" nature of the Pahouin groupings and came to the